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PLASHER'S PROSPECTS.

PLASHER, Historical Painter, and my intimate friend, is profoundly convinced that he will certainly be R.A.—some day. Though with every desire to do so, I cannot share, for several reasons, this conviction of Plasher, H. P., and my intimate friend.

I have some acquaintance amongst the painters ; I am privileged with the right of entrée to several studios, and a greater privilege I do not know. What can be pleasanter than to stroll round an artist's room, examining the drawings and sketches, and listening to the words of wisdom that fall from the master at the easel. I feel, as it were, behind the scenes. I watch the tricking out of the characters for their parts ; I note the changes that take place in the grouping, the dressing, and the colouring. I make the acquaintance of the picture in its infancy, mark its gradual growth, rejoice in its full manhood ; and when it comes out, as they say of a young lady, recognise it in the saloons of the Royal Academy as a friend I have known from its birth, and in whose welfare I take a fatherly interest. When in these studios, I am proud to feel that I am not merely one of the public. I meet celebrated picture-buyers ; I am not unacquainted with engravers ; I know models. It was my happiness to be introduced to St Peter only the other day, and a very fine-looking old man he is. The last time I saw John the Baptist was at W.'s, the water-colour painter's, who was with great propriety painting the Baptist with a brush of camel's hair. Sir John Falstaff is my very good friend, but dull, sir—dull. Iago, the worthiest fellow within my knowledge, supports a blind mother and a crippled sister in an attic in Paddington. Being blest with an obliging disposition and some personal advantages, I often play the model myself. My head has been delivered in a charger to the daughter of Herodias (very nice girl the daughter of Herodias) ; this fist has smitten the cheek of Judge Gascoigne (one Wilson) ; with these arms I slew Goliath (Jones) ; and in one and the same picture my calves were Alfred the Great's calves,

while my ankles were the ankles of Guthrum. It follows, of course, from this that when I visit the Galleries, I do so with a pleasure not shared by the general public. When I hear persons praising one of *our* pictures, I feel flattered, for have I not—literally—a hand in it ? I lie in wait by these favoured works, and listen. When I hear some fair lips repeating : 'No. 290. John the Baptist's Head in a Charger' ; then, after a pause : 'Beautiful ! I shall mark that, mamma'—am I not justified in taking the remark as a personal compliment ? I am bound to confess that my identity with my likenesses has never, to my knowledge, been perceived. As regards my arms and lower extremities, concealed by the artificial integuments which modern custom requires, I am not surprised at this ; indeed, nothing else could well be expected. But that a face so— However, to leave these personal matters, and return to Plasher, whose friendship I value highly, whose studio I visit constantly, and whose confidence in the Future I admire, but alas ! cannot share.

Now, I do not deny for a moment that Plasher is a meritorious painter ; on the contrary, I allow it. His colouring is good, his drawing capital, his composition most artful ; he is full of enthusiasm, talks much of inspiration, and evidently has his whole mind in his art. You cannot be in his company for any length of time without being made painfully aware that Plasher's mind is in his art. A man who cannot observe nature and decorum at the same time ; whom I have seen frighten an anxious mother almost into fits, by stopping suddenly before a perambulator, and remarking : 'Well, I never saw a child's head come off in that way before ;' who will, in public thoroughfares, put himself into the most extravagant attitudes, that he may regard an effect of light to the best advantage, utterly indifferent to the fact that, in the eyes of the passers-by, he is a madman, and you are his keeper ; who, seeing a housemaid looking out of a window, will seize you roughly by the arm, point straight at the object, and exclaim in a sonorous voice : 'Look, Jezebel ! By Jove, Jezebel !' or who will come to a sudden stand-still before an

eminently respectable lawyer's clerk, and, while fumbling for pencil and paper, cry: 'Here's Judas Iscariot for you, bag and all!' Surely such a man must be devoted to his art; and such a man is Plasher. Then he is humble extremely as regards his own works, and sits with childlike humility at the feet of all the great artists, ancient and modern. 'Why don't I paint like this?' says he, as he stands before a picture by some well-known master: 'why don't I paint like this?' Why didn't I think of this instead of him? What had he more than I to get such a picture from? Brushes, paint, and a white canvas we both have to begin with; and he produces this great work, this glorious conception, while I—— and poor Plasher strikes his brow, and turns away, thinking of the unfinished picture in the little room at home with a very sad heart. He is always willing to learn. He studies Reynolds's Lectures to this day; and when he assumes the instructor—and I am always happy when he does so—models his conversation upon the rather ponderous style of that great man.

He will reply to you often in the very words of Reynolds. You watch him painting, and say it looks so easy. 'And it is easy,' says Plasher, laughing lightly. You venture to differ from him on this point, and reply, that to you it is confoundedly hard. A look of awful solemnity then comes over Plasher, and he responds with: "The impetuosity of youth is disgusted at the slow approaches of a regular siege, and desires, from mere impatience of labour, to take the citadel by storm; they wish to find some shorter path; &c." (See Reynolds's *Lectures*, Discourse I.) An earnest student of nature, too, is Plasher; nature is perpetually in his eye and in his mouth. To use his own language: 'he who would secure truth without soliciting nature, has set himself a task which he may always attempt, but will never accomplish, and one which, beginning in folly, will certainly end in humiliation.' But with all his good points—with his fine drawing, with his good colouring, with his careful composition; in spite of his perseverance, of his humility, of his loving study of nature, I doubt very much if R.A. will ever decorate the name of Plasher.

And for this opinion I have, I think, good grounds.

My first cause of complaint against Plasher is this—he does not despise the amateur art-critic. Amateur art-critics are of two kinds: the Thorough and the Spurious. The thorough amateur critic is he who takes his stand outside the magic circle, who confesses his ignorance of all tricks and terms of the trade, who prides himself upon regarding everything by the light of common sense alone. His favourite remark is: 'I know nothing about painting, you know; I only know what I like.' The more correct way of putting it would be: 'I only know what I dislike;' for if there be one severe creature upon this earth, it is the thorough amateur art-critic. The expression of his or her

face—for the thorough amateur is male and female, and I think the female of the species by odds the more offensive of the two—its expression, I say, when looking at a picture, is one of clumsy dislike. It is the very incarnation of the idea of brute-force as opposed to science. The creature glories in candour. It is proud that it dares to say what, through mere perverseness, it chooses to think; it would much rather give no opinion, but if you force it, ah! then it must tell the truth. After standing in gloomy silence before a picture for five minutes, it is at length, perhaps, asked by some one: 'Well, my dear, and how do you like Mr Plasher's picture?' The creature giggles like an hysterical ghoul, and replies: 'Oh, I don't like it at all.' It then hastens to add, that of course it knows nothing about the art of the thing, but it knows what it likes. If, anxious for the artist's feelings, you question it as to what displeases it, it gives its opinion piecemeal. In so doing, it eschews, with ill-concealed art, all technical terms. Keeping its common-sense ground constantly in its recollection, it speaks of the principal figure as 'that person.' Instead of saying that it thinks such and such a thing out of drawing—a common enough phrase, surely—it says that it thinks it is 'wrong drawn.' Instead of saying that it objects to the grouping, it says that it thinks 'those people are put in bad order.' If asked whether it does not think the general tone of the picture good, it giggles as before, and replies that it doesn't know what you mean; in speaking to it, it would be so much obliged if you would use only common-sense terms, as it does not understand technicalities. If, instead of questioning it, in the hope of eliciting some commendation, you leave it to itself, it will make its presence known by some hideous remark, which, under the form of a compliment, will simply convey an insult—some speech like an artificial flower, with a real serpent under it. The commonest way in which it attains this desirable end is to take some unimportant personage in the composition, consider it as the principal figure, and praise it accordingly. For instance, imagine it looking at a picture of the 'Martyrdom of St Stephen'; it will pick out some particularly fiendish-looking murderer in one corner, point at him, and say: 'What a heavenly face! The very idea of the first martyr. Your St Stephen, Mr Plasher, is most successful.'

Being set right as to the figure of Stephen, it will feign a regret for its mistake, but remark audibly to its next neighbour, that to its mind 'this one is much more like a saint than the man in the middle.' Another way is to fix its eyes upon some trivial object, a pair of shoes, or a stone, or a flower, and to fall into such an admiration for it, that it cannot spare a thought or a glance for the rest of the picture. A third and still more insulting course is to ignore the picture altogether, and to go into raptures about the beauty of the frame. Oh! ye Powers of Criticism, subject my picture to the strictures of the trade, let loose upon it the tongue

of my bitterest enemy, lash me with the scourge of him who does the picture-galleries for the daily papers; but save me, oh, save me from the thorough amateur, especially if in erinoline!

The spurious amateur art-critic is a much less dreadful creature. He loves to make-believe that he stands upon the same ground with the artist; he tries to make himself appear as much as possible one of the craft. For this purpose, he disguises himself, so to speak; puts on all the tricks that he has seen made use of by painters—holding his head on one side, looking through his fingers, shading his eyes; then arms himself with professional phraseology, and so enters into the battle. As a rule, his first remark is something about breadth; and as he says the word, he extends his arm, turns the palm of his hand to the picture, and moves the limb so disposed horizontally from left to right. Then he diverges to keeping, touches upon tone, has a word or two about middle distance, and is very powerful upon chiaro-oscuro. The suggestions he makes, the way in which he sets you right, are bold in the extreme. He thinks your composition here rather faulty; he doesn't like this form. If you were to move your principal figure three inches or so to the right, it would be all the better; you would get space. And so on; and extraordinarily sickening it is; in all eyes, except Plasher's, simply contemptible, but by him regarded with deep respect. He has more than the patience of Job for nonsense of this kind. Unlike the Patriarch, he seldom thinks of arguing with his friends. If Eliphaz tells him that one of his figures is out of drawing—Eliphaz never drew anything nobler than corks and cheques in his life—Plasher is miserable in consequence. If Zophar hints that he does not admire the colour of a robe—to judge from Zophar's own habiliments, his taste in dress is villainous—Plasher worries himself for a week to find out what is wrong. If Bildad suggests that the background will never do—as Bildad wears green spectacles invariably when out of doors, it is beyond reason that he should know what a background really is like—Plasher retouches it.

This morbid reverence for other people's opinions, this respect for what deserves no respect, is my first complaint against Plasher. The second is something of the same kind. If such criticism as the above have any weight with Plasher, it will easily be believed that suggestions by his brother-artists are law to him; and the second charge that I have to bring against him is, that he takes unhesitatingly any advice, however off-hand or absurd, given by a painter.

When he took in hand to paint the execution of Lady Jane Grey, the watery instability of Plasher was pitiable. It is humiliating to tell, but it was much on this wise. Plasher, full of his subject, and all in a glow with—well, he says it is inspiration—makes a careful sketch, gets a big canvas, sets to work, and is progressing rapidly, when enter to him Tooley. (Tooley's children's heads are allowed on all hands to be 'sweetly pretty.')

'Ha! what have we here?' says Tooley.

'Execution of Lady Jane Grey,' replies Plasher, continuing his work.

Tooley remains silent for so long, that Plasher, getting uneasy, inquires, without turning round, how he likes the sketch. Tooley makes no answer,

and Plasher, seriously disturbed, turning towards his visitor, finds him shaking his head.

'Eh!' says Plasher anxiously; 'anything wrong?'

'Too terrible, my dear fellow,' answers Tooley—'much too terrible: you mustn't pile up the agony in this style; you'll only disgust the public.'

'Shall I, though?' says Plasher despondingly. 'Think it'll disgust 'em?'

'Why, ask yourself,' Tooley returns, 'whether it's likely that any one would hang such a frightful scene as that in his room. Faugh! it smells of blood. It will turn the public stomach, you know, to a certainty. Horrors, *mon cher*, should be implied skilfully, not expressed baldly in this way. If I were you, I'd turn the picture. The idea's good, very good; but it should be looked at from exactly the opposite side. Merely transpose it. Draw it as if you were looking through the back of the picture, and you'll get all the effect without rendering the public heart-strings.'

Sincerely grateful, and quite convinced, Plasher, with much labour, follows Tooley's advice; but when he has done with the sketch as recommended, and is beginning to work upon the large canvas again, who should call but Dibber. (Dibber's great picture of 'Pestilence, Famine, and the Sword,' must still live in the recollection of all who ever looked upon that truly awful work.)

'Well!' says Dibber, 'and what now?'

'Execution of Lady Jane Grey,' replies Plasher.

'Ha!' returns Dibber. 'Indeed! Just so. Yes! I don't—I don't exactly make out where your Lady Jane is.'

'Here!' Plasher explains. 'Don't you see? Horrors should be skilfully implied, rather than baldly expressed, so I kept it gloomy there, you know; but that is she in the dark.'

'In the dark, all cats are gray, eh!' says Dibber brutally. 'Well, my dear fellow, I can only tell you that this picture might represent the execution of any mortal you like from John the Baptist downwards. This will never do, you know. Let's have no squeamishness. If one thing disgusts the public more than another, it's squeamishness. You must fetch your victim out of that corner. Bring her right up to the foot-lights. All the eyes of Europe could not make her out as she is at present. Now, if I were you I'd set my block here, right in front; kneel my Lady Jane before it, and station my headsman here. Then the public will have some chance of understanding what's going on. You must tell your tale plainly, for the public are confounded dull.'

Blown about by every wind, the unstable Plasher makes another sketch in which he attempts to meet the public comprehension without, at the same time, rending the heart-strings of that potent body. But just when he thinks he has succeeded, a third friend calls, who, after displaying more than Tooley's sensitiveness, and more than Dibber's anxiety for clearness, combined with notions as to the costume of a headsman all his own, strongly advises that the picture be given up altogether, as the public taste has taken a turn, and they won't have executions at any price.

And this naturally brings us to another of Plasher's weak points—his carelessness as to what the public *will have*. This contemptible phrase signifies that the artist is to watch the direction which popular favour takes with regard to subjects;

that, when he sees the public pleased with any picture, he is to set to work immediately, and paint something of the same kind ; that he is, in fact, to follow just where other and cleverer men choose to lead. At the time that the great picture of the 'Martyrdom of St Jeronimo' was creating such a sensation, I remember calling upon Plasher in order to see how his pretty little picture of 'How doth the little Busy Bee' was getting on. To my astonishment, when I entered his studio, instead of finding my friend poring over his small picture, face to face with a beehive, and surrounded with flowers, I saw him standing upon a pair of steps placed before an enormous canvas, and painting away with a brush about the size of a small besom. 'The Busy Bee' was turned with its face to the wall, the flowers were all hustled into one corner, and the beehive was lying upside down in the fender, evidently kicked there by the impetuous Plasher. My usual salutation of 'How do you do, old fellow, and how doth the little Busy?' was checked at the very point of utterance, and without a word of salutation I cried : 'What on earth are you about up there ?'

'Martyrdom of St Dominic,' replied Plasher, working away like fury. After a short silence, during which I stared sometimes at Dominic and sometimes at Plasher, admiring as much the sanguine spirit of the artist as the gory carcass of the saint, I ventured to inquire if the 'Busy Bee' were finished. 'No,' answered Plasher—'not quite finished. The fact is, my dear fellow,' he said, arresting for a moment the movements of his immense brush, and addressing me from the summit of the steps—'the fact is, Busy Bees are not high art—now, are they ? Isn't there something paltry about bees after all, when you come to think of it ? Can you fancy Michael Angelo sitting down quietly to paint a Busy Bee ? I've felt for a long time that I've chosen too slight subjects. I must do something in the grand and awful style. He who would shew the full force of genius, must not cramp its energies in confined space, but must give it room to expatiate. You've seen the "Martyrdom of St Jeronimo" ? Of course you have. Well, there's a picture for you. Believe me, martyrdoms will be all the go now. The public like martyrdoms—they like 'em, and they must have 'em.' And to it again went Plasher, the bastard inspiration strong upon him. I need say no more about this picture than that, contrary to the painter's expectation, the public did not like it, and would not have it, and that subsequently, when the public had expressed its satisfaction at Dodder's 'Eruption of Mount Vesuvius,' the canvas of the St Dominic was devoted by Plasher to a glowing representation of 'Mount Etna in a State of Eruption.' Such an ambition as this, an ambition that aims no higher than to repeat, with some slight variation, the works of other men, is a very pitiful sentiment indeed ; and a man who scorns delights and lives laborious days—as I am bound to confess Plasher does—in the hope of winning fame by its help, is merely paying a vilely bad servant enormously high wages. It is such suicidal folly. It is voluntarily stepping back in the start for the race, and giving your rivals a clear lead, in order that you may imitate the way in which they run. It is condemning yourself to be always a step behind. Oh, if Plasher would only believe that the public are not so dull as all this ; that popular

favour is not a thing to be run after and caught by the skirts, but to be met suddenly and boldly, he would not waste his life in ignominiously tracking his charmer from pillar to post, with a strong probability of never gaining her in the end.

It will be seen that Plasher's faults all result from one cause—moral cowardice. He has no confidence in himself ; he thinks his own approval or disapproval worth nothing ; every one's opinion upon every subject is, in his eyes, better than his own ; he has no independence of mind ; he must be always leaning upon something. Signs of weakness of character all of these, no doubt, and I don't for a moment deny that Plasher's is a weak character ; but then, poor fellow ! we must remember that he was denied what would have helped to buttress up his feeble nature—education. Plasher was taken away from school too early. If you want to train up a boy to be an artist, there can be no greater mistake than to take him from school at twelve or thirteen, and set him to draw. If you do this, you cultivate his hand at the expense of his head ; his fingers acquire a certain mechanical dexterity ; but his mental powers, merely from want of cultivation, get into a state of rust, from which only men of strong will can ever recover. The intense ignorance of art-students is something to marvel at. Go into any of the drawing-schools ; you will see there boys who draw like angels. Ask one of these boys, who, perhaps, has just finished a charming drawing of the Apollo, to give you a few facts connected with the history of that handsome divinity ; or bid him tell you the story of Laocoön and the serpents. (La-coon is the professional pronunciation, as if the name were of Yankee origin. I should like to hear the trade try its hand at scanning 'Laocoön ductus Neptuno sorte sacerdos.') He will probably know that Apollo had something to do with the Sun ; but for the others, whether the serpents are killing Laocoön, or Laocoön the serpents ; or whether, after all, the Messrs Laocoön were merely serpent-charmers, and are here represented in their grand tableau, as performed under the most distinguished patronage, before a select circle of Trojans, Lycians, Dardans, and allies, he will, in all human probability, be utterly ignorant. Is it wonderful that the painter's profession should still be very generally regarded as not quite the profession for a gentleman ; that the world should occasionally turn up its nose at artists still ? Or is the world much to blame for doing so, if, as most people seem to think, manual dexterity be all that is required to make a painter ? But if, as is the fact, the utmost refinement of mind, the most educated intellect, the most cultivated taste, a wide acquaintance with literature, an extensive knowledge of the manners of different nations, of the climate and natural productions of different countries, are more necessary to the making of a really great artist, than of a man in any other profession under the sun—what madness is it to take your boy from his books at twelve years old, put a crayon-holder into his hands, and let his mental education from that time take care of itself. If he turns out a great artist after such a bringing-up as that, you may be quite sure he is a genius.

Now, as I have said, Plasher was brought up on this absurd principle ; the consequence is, that not only has his character received no strength from a sound education, but his acquaintance with many

things most necessary to an artist is lamentably meagre. His knowledge of history, for instance, seems to be confined to what he may have gleaned from the works of the old masters. Quite of a childlike character is his belief in what he has thus learned. All is fish that comes to his net, and fact and fiction are all one to him. He has a profound faith in Hercules, for has he not studied every muscle in his body. He knows there were twelve apostles, for he has painted them every one. I almost think he fancies that St Peter was born with a bald head and a gray beard; and that St John was a very young-looking man to the day of his death. Obtaining his information, as he does, principally from pictures, he is sometimes led slightly astray; for instance, he firmly believes, on the authority of Titian and Paul Veronese, that the monkish orders were in existence at the time of the birth of Christ; and no doubt it is to this misapprehension that he owes the further mistake of supposing that the first Christian martyrs were the victims of Roman Catholic persecution. A little confusion into which he has fallen with reference to the legendary visit of St Paul to Britain, which he declares could never have taken place, or the Romans when they subsequently discovered the island, would not have found a heathen population, is not perhaps distinctly traceable to any particular master; but there is little doubt that to Rembrandt is due Plasher's impression that the beds used by the Jews were occasionally four-posters. As he is one of those men who never take up a book without feeling a disposition to sleep coming upon them, he has necessarily but a very slight, in fact, merely a nodding acquaintance with profane history. He speaks of the whole period between the death of Julius Caesar and the birth of Sir Joshua Reynolds as the 'Middle Ages'; and when questioned as to anything which occurred in that rather wide interval, he inclines his head to one side, frowns thoughtfully, as if the particulars had but momentarily escaped him, and murmurs: 'Let's see now; what is Hallam's view?' Had poor Plasher but been left for a few years longer at school, had he not entered a drawing-academy till he was twenty years old, how much better would have been his chance of gaining a high place in his profession!

The last defect to which I shall refer is this—he carries too far his principle of painting everything from nature. So great is his dread of ever departing from nature, that he will do nothing without a model. The result is, that when his picture happens to be one in which the intenser passions are called into action, Plasher falls fatally below his subject. You cannot get the intenser passions from a model at eighteenpence an hour; nor can your dearest friend, however anxious to oblige you, throw into his face the wrath of Samuel or the grief of David; for even a few seconds, with any real success; for passions such as these the artist must trust partly to his memory, and partly to his imagination. As a close observer of nature, he must occasionally have looked upon scenes in which rage and grief, in all their naked reality, have stood for a moment before him, as different from mere simulated passion as a sword drawn in actual quarrel is from the bloodless rapier of the stage. Each scene of this kind is invaluable to the artist, for it is his imagination working from such recollections as these that pictures for him the

sentiment he requires. This, however, is a high quality, and one which, I fear, Plasher does not possess. Look at his picture of 'Demosthenes denouncing Philip,' the subject of which was suggested to him by a friend, who carefully explained all the particulars, down to the very pebbles in the mouth of the orator. Now, considering what we know of Demosthenes; that he was the greatest of orators; that the eloquence of his action was as telling as the eloquence of his words; that his adversaries, confounded and overwhelmed, were often carried fainting from the sound of that terrible voice, from the sight of that terrible hand—it must be allowed that Plasher had undertaken a noble but a difficult task. Look at the picture now. Plasher's Demosthenes stands full face to you, one hand pointing straight at you, the other raised above his head as if grasping after the bolts of Jove himself, whereewith to annihilate the adversary. (Fine conception of Plasher's.) The body is bent forward, the head thrown up; one sandalled foot, as if the orator already felt it on the neck of his foe (noble thought of Plasher's), is displayed from beneath the robe. So stands Plasher's Demosthenes, and so—for I was present on the occasion—stood Towler the model.

Plasher, more impressed, perhaps, with Demosthenes' ingenious cure for stammering than with any other part of the story, had, after some difficulty, which an additional sixpence an hour finally obviated, persuaded Towler to hold a marble in his mouth; and when he first threw himself into the prescribed attitude, I thought that, barring a slight embarrassment consequent upon a fear of choking, Towler presented a grand appearance. For my own part, I should have painted away, satisfied with having secured so much nature as that; but not so Plasher. 'We must get him to talk,' he whispered to me; 'if we can only get him to talk, it will be the very thing.' And after some encouragement, talk Towler did. He told us of what a delightful day he had spent at Greenwich on the preceding Friday, the anniversary of his wedding-day. He told us how he had taken Mrs Towler and the two children to that pleasant neighbourhood; how they had passed the hours in delicious idleness, chasing each other amongst the splendid trees, or reclining luxuriously upon the velvet turf. He told us how Mrs Towler's sister, Sophia, a maiden of surpassing charms, though not equal, by a long way, to Mrs Towler when he married her, nor, indeed, to Mrs Towler in her present state of matronly beauty, but still exceeding fair, had accompanied them; how Miss Sophia was keeping company with a young man by the name of Suffle, a market-gardener by trade, and of rather a religious turn of mind, being a Centipede Baptist, and an attendant upon the ministrations of one Gargle; how Mr Suffle's religious feelings did not prevent his going down-hill very fast hand in hand with Miss Sophia; how Mr and Mrs Towler, fired by their example, did the like, and how shrimps and tea put a finishing-touch to a day of pleasure. With a face of the keenest enjoyment, did Towler tell us all this; with a rapid and faithful hand, did Plasher transfer this face to the canvas. And what is the result? Here is Demosthenes in an attitude of wild excitement, every movement of his body indicating intense rage, denouncing Philip with a face that bubbles placidly of shrimps and tea.

'And that's a real bit of nature for you,' Plasher says.

Nature, no doubt, every line of it, and therefore satisfactory to Plasher; but will a tale like that, full of sound and fury, yet signifying nothing, satisfy the world? Will the painter of such a picture ever attain eminence in his profession? In a word, will Plasher ever be R. A.?

I fear, I very much fear, not.

LIGHTED BY SMOKE.

Is an edition of Stow's *Survey of London*, which was published in 1633, is the following entry: '1417. Mayor, Sir Henry Barton, Skinner. This Henry Barton ordained lanthorns with lights to be hanged out on the winter evenings, betwixt Hallow-tide and Candlemasse.' As far as we can learn, this is the earliest authentic account of the streets of the city of London being lighted at night, although Maitland asserts that lanterns with glass sides were used in the year 1414. Between this date and the beginning of the reign of Charles II., there is, now and then, an allusion to candles or lanterns being used in the streets; but it was not until the close of his reign that any strenuous means were taken to light the crooked streets. It is difficult to picture the difference between London in 1665 and in 1865. Those were the days when Regent Street was a solitude, where a stray woodcock might be found; when the land north of Holborn was a fair district of corn-fields and pastures, beyond which snipes might be shot; and Oxford Street was pleasantly lined with hedgerows instead of dingy houses. The fashionable world then dwelt in Covent Garden and Lincoln's Inn Fields, regardless, in the former case, of a filthy market before their door, where 'fruit-women screamed, carters fought, and cabbage-stalks and rotten apples accumulated in heaps'; and in the latter, that their drawing-room windows should overlook a general dust-heap, round which the scum of London collected in an evening to beg, thief, and bear-bait.

The roads and pavements were abominable; drainage there was none, save when a heavy rain washed the collection of filth before the stalls of greengrocers and butchers down the gutter in the middle of the road, from whence the passing carriages dashed it on the unfortunate pedestrians. This was the state of things during the day; and it is easy to picture how much worse they became after nightfall, when it was difficult to grope down narrow crooked streets, infested by thieves, robbers, and ruffianly gentlemen. No wonder, then, that the good citizens of London longed for lights to protect their steeps, and made several efforts to establish them generally, all of which failed until the last year of the reign of the 'Merrie Monarch.' In the year 1684, one Edward Henning applied for and obtained letters-patent, giving him for a term of twenty-one years the exclusive right of lighting the streets of London. Lamps were to be hung over every tenth door, between the hours of six and twelve at night, from Martinmas to Ladyday. To this, however, there was to be an exception. After the first quarter, and until the third night after the moon was full, the lights were to be discontinued. Of course, Henning demanded and received a remuneration from the householders facing the road,

and, in return, besides lighting the streets, he undertook to pay the sum of six hundred pounds per annum to the Orphan Fund.

By some, this scheme was loudly denounced, as innovations have been, and always will be; but the chief part of the inhabitants saw the benefit of the measure, and trusted to it to check the success of the highwaymen, who rode nightly into the streets, and committed their depredations with impunity. At that time, highway robbery was at its height. If within the city, there were riotous bullies who robbed inoffensive passengers, beating them when disappointed of booty; without, on Finchley Common and Hounslow Heath, the aristocrats of thieves reigned supreme. After enduring robbery and darkness some years longer, the arrangement in favour of lighting the streets by private contract was done away with; and in 1716, the municipal authorities ordained that each householder must hang a lamp outside his door, with sufficient wick in it to burn from six o'clock to eleven at night, and for every occasion on which it died out before that time, he was to be fined one shilling. As might have been expected, this arrangement soon failed, being troublesome in the extreme; and after a few years of wavering between different systems, all of which were bad, an act of parliament was procured, which ordered that glass lamps should be set up and kept burning all through the night, and at all times of the year. This was in 1736; and to defray the expenses, a rate was levied on all householders rented at and above ten pounds a year; and any person could evade the charge by undertaking to hang out a lantern of his own. These lamps were of strong crystal glass, provided with three wicks; and the law being carried out with spirit, some five thousand lamps were set up, which, with private lamps, amounted, according to Maitland, to as many as fifteen thousand. Before the end of the eighteenth century, they are described as presenting a 'beautiful and noble' appearance, and Oxford Street alone could boast of more lamps than the city of Paris.

In a curious old book by a Frenchman on the state of London in 1765, there is a description of the street-lamps, and from it we may glean some idea of what the 'beautiful and noble' appearance really was. 'The iron railing' says the Frenchman, 'more or less ornamented, terminates in pilasters, forming a sort of advanced doorway, surmounted by two little lamps, which it is expected every house will furnish towards the lighting of the city during the night, thus uniting ornament with utility. The only inconvenience resulting from it is, that notwithstanding the respectful manners of the working-classes of England towards the public, it is difficult to prevent spilling the oil during the daily trimming of the lamps. I saw a person's head broke by the fall of one of these; he, however, took it in good part, and seemed well contented with the excuses of the lamp-lighter. These lamps, all enclosed in glass coverings, are lighted about half an hour after sunset; they illuminate the pavement, but in the middle of the wide streets there is scarcely light enough to guide the numerous vehicles.' Dim as this illumination seems to have been, it far exceeded anything to be found in the continental towns, and for seventy years gave London the character of being the best lighted city in

Europe. The same reason as that which caused the Londoners to desire lights so much, prompted the Parisians. Thieves infested their streets to a greater extent than in London, and after one or two directions had been issued, *falots* were provided in the streets in October 1558. Of these falots, which consisted of high jars containing pitch or rosin, there were nearly three thousand at the corners of the chief streets, and in the courts of great houses. Only, however, one month after their establishment, we find them superseded by lanterns, which answered no better than those used in London. An ecclesiastic of the name of Landati suggested the idea of letting out lanterns and torches for hire. Booths were set up where a lantern and bearer could be hired, at three or five sous for every quarter of an hour, according as the light was required for a coach or pedestrian, and the time was measured by an hour-glass attached to each lantern. The Hague seems to have been even earlier in the advance of civilisation, as, in 1553, the inhabitants put lamps outside their doors, and soon afterwards had small stone-houses in the chief streets, in which lights were kept burning. Amsterdam had lamp-posts, against which the authorities forbade any one tying their horses, as by so doing the posts were damaged. Berlin, Copenhagen, Hamburg, Hanover, and Vienna, all had lights before the close of the seventeenth century. In the last-named city, all lamps were hung out on the ringing of a bell in the evening, and public lamp-dressers were appointed, to whom all the householders took their lamps to be filled with oil, and prepared for the evening's consumption. Leipsic, Dresden, Cassel, Halle, Göttingen, Brunswick, and Zürich, all gradually adopted lights, but none of them until the eighteenth century was begun, and some of them not before it was nearly past. Italy and Spain were the slowest to adopt the improvement; and even five-and-twenty years ago, Naples was left in total darkness, much to the discomfort of any stranger who might miss his way after night-fall.

Such were the humble means of lighting the chief continental cities and our own vast Babylon at the end of the last century; and sixty years ago there was, perhaps, not a single gaslight in London. It is amusing to read of country visitors to the capital, soon after that time, having their attention 'arrested by the new and singular spectacle' of Pall Mall illuminated by gas in a 'style of much superior brilliancy' to the old smoking dim oil-lamps. It seems as if there must be a far greater distance in time between this and the numberless flaring jets of dazzling light now seen in every narrow London street. But what is much stranger is the fact, that the production of gas from coal was known in England more than two hundred years ago, and that this knowledge should not have been seized upon by some energetic mind, and turned to practical use, and to the lighting of the metropolis itself. It is said that Dr Johnson had a glimmering foresight of the coming change. One evening, while watching the lamp-lighter reascend the ladder to light again the lamp which had died out the first time, he noticed that the flame was communicated to the wick by the thick smoke, or gas, that was ascending. 'Ah,' exclaimed the doctor, 'one of these days, the streets of London will be *lighted by smoke!*' The first attempt at

'lighting by smoke' occurred in the year 1659, when some considerable exhalations from a burning coal-mine at Wigan in Lancashire attracted the attention of a man named Thomas Shirley. His observations were communicated to Dr Clayton, who, making experiments upon them, succeeded in forming gas from coal; and information of his discovery was immediately sent to Robert Boyle. Having distilled the coal in a retort, he confined the gas in bladders, leaving behind the phlegm and black oil, as he called the remaining constituents of coal. Here we touch on another interesting field of discovery. The despised remains in the retorts have now been made to produce other and more costly substances, which would have greatly astonished Dr Clayton. Not only, however, was he acquainted with the means of producing gas, but he knew well how it was adaptable for burning, as he exhibited its properties to his friends by pricking holes in the bladder and setting fire to the gas as it escaped. This is the earliest record of the production of gas that has come under our notice; but before the eighteenth century had half passed away, there was another notice of it.

In the papers of the Royal Society for 1733, there is an interesting account, by Sir James Lowther, of an evolution of gas in a coal-mine at Whitehaven. Some of the colliers were astonished and alarmed at a rush of air, as it seemed to them, taking fire at their candles. The flame is described as burning two yards high and one in breadth, and they had some difficulty in putting it out by flapping their hats. Informing the steward, he descended into the mine to prove their statement, and having set fire to the gas, he had much more trouble in extinguishing it than they had had. To prevent dangerous consequences, a tube was made to let off the gas above the mouth of the pit, and persons in the neighbourhood filled bladders from it, burning the gas for their own convenience. It is also stated, that the gas issuing from the tube having been set on fire, went on burning for two years and nine months without any apparent decrease; but how long it continued, we do not know. In this case, as in almost every other European discovery, we find the Chinese have been our forerunners in experiment and adaptation. The *Philosophical Transactions* give an account of a Chinese mine, where, in boring through the coal strata for salt-water, large jets of gas were released, rising twenty and thirty feet into the air. With great ingenuity, the stream of gas was turned and made useful in manufacturing salt, as by it the salt-water was boiled and evaporated. It was likewise conveyed in pipes to the dwelling-houses of the miners, and by them used as it is with us. Any overplus was carried off still further, and escaping through perpendicular tubes or chimneys, was set fire to, and so got rid of.

These instances will shew that gas as a consumable substance was well known; and it is strange that no one should have attempted to adapt it to household use, and still stranger is it that, after it was once so used, no one should have tried to introduce it as a means of public street-lighting until the beginning of this century. The first person who made it and used it for domestic purposes was Mr Murdoch of Redruth, in Cornwall, who, having a small retort, made sufficient gas to supply his house and offices. This was in 1792; and five years after, on his removing to Scotland,

he constructed another gasometer, and made use of it as he had previously done in Cornwall. From Ayrshire the great adaptation passed to Birmingham, where Messrs Boulton and Watt had their premises lighted with it, and from them it spread to other Birmingham houses, and thence to Halifax, Manchester, and other northern manufacturing towns. Still, London, where it was most needed, remained behind-hand, perhaps from the fact that the gas was rather dirty, as no effective means of purifying it was then known. People complained that it caused headache, and generated so much smoke that furniture and drawing-room adornments were injured by it; a drawback not felt in manufactoryes. It would not have affected the comfort of the inhabitants if it had been used in the open air for street-lighting; but this was not tried; and it was only after a series of lectures given by him that a German, named Winsor, succeeded in drawing attention to it.

In 1804, Winsor established a National Light and Heat Company, out of the funds of which a grand series of experiments were to be carried on, for the purpose of convincing parliament of the value of gas. One of these experiments was the lighting of Pall Mall in 1807, and this was the first street in London which abolished the old oil-lamps. However great may have been Winsor's admiration for gas as a general light, and however sanguine he may have been as to its ultimate success, there is no doubt that he lacked common-sense, all knowledge of business, and was greatly deficient in chemical and mechanical skill. To bring his scheme into general notice, he published pamphlets, which called forth the contempt of the leading journal of that day. In it we find his treatises described as betraying 'at every step such ignorance, quackery, extravagance, and false calculations, that we had scarcely patience to wade through them.' No wonder such was the judgment upon them, when we find him promising as an 'absolute certainty' a profit of 'six hundred pounds a year for every five pounds' adventure'; and modestly calculating the national profit at one hundred and fifty millions a year. It did not occur to him, or he must have supposed it would not have done so to other people, that there might be some working expenses, &c., to lessen the profits; and with such wild and ignorant ideas, we are not surprised to learn that the subscriptions to his Company, amounting to fifty thousand pounds, were all spent in experiments; and the subscribers, instead of receiving a moderate dividend, saw their money rapidly squandered. The most contemptible part of Winsor's case is his trying to prove himself the *discoverer* of coal-gas; but this assumption of rights which were not his own was quickly prevented by parliament, who knew of Mr Murdoch's previous and successful use of gas. Let us, however, give Winsor his due. Few inventions have met with such decided opposition as gaslighting, and his persevering endeavours to obtain support for the scheme, greatly aided its development, if they did not entirely bring it into notice.

Alas for the narrowness of judgment in the largest minds! Strong in the pride and confidence of its present power and knowledge, the human intellect refuses to believe that they may be surpassed. Who would have thought that Humphry

Davy, with his inventive mind and chemical skill, could have ridiculed the use of a gas as a light! But he, we are told, asked the inventors 'if it was intended to take the dome of St Paul's for a gasometer;' and one of our veteran statesmen, who now sees nothing but gas used in brilliant perfection, added to the difficulties in its introduction by his unlimited ridicule. Winsor at last succeeded in obtaining a charter for his Company from parliament. The Company was re-established, and a new manager appointed, who combined prudence with zeal, and the new light began to be generally used. After being in working-order about fifteen years, it was found that the Company produced on an average 680,000 cubic feet of gas every night. The increase in the supply indicates the increasing appreciation of this useful light. In 1838, the nightly consumption of gas in London alone was computed at eight millions and a half of cubic feet; ten years later, the annual production of our gasworks was estimated at nine thousand millions of cubic feet! The number of companies undertaking to make gas in Great Britain is upwards of a thousand. Should any one feel an interest in watching the onward progress of this manufacture, a regular and correct account of it will be found from time to time in the *Builder*.

To give a description of the making of gas would be superfluous. Most persons know how it is produced from coal, and purified by lime; and should further information be desired, it is obtained easily and effectively at any gaswork. But there are one or two interesting improvements connected with the lighting of lofty burners by electricity, and the introduction of water-gas, which are not perhaps so generally known. The use of electricity to light lofty burners is no especial novelty, but has been successfully applied in the Music Hall of the Edinburgh University. The sun-lights, from being in the centre of a ceiling which is fifty feet from the floor, and forty feet in width, are rather awkwardly placed for any unscientific mode of lighting; therefore a 'galvanic battery' is placed in the cellar, and from it positive and negative wires are carried up the side of the hall and along the ceiling to immediately over the burners. There they are coiled round the poles of an electro-magnet, to the keeper of which are attached a couple of wires bearing a platina-wire. On the current of electricity being established at the battery, the platina-wire, placed within an inch of the burner, becomes red-hot, and the gas being simultaneously turned on, the whole 75 lights, which are closely contiguous, immediately flash into flame. The electric current is then arrested, and the electro-magnet ceasing to be a magnet, its keeper, with the wire attached, falls three inches below the flame, so drawing down the platina-wire out of the way of the flame of the gas.

Water-gas seems likely to become a cheaper and very useful means of light, as it is formed by superheated steam and any hydrocarbon—tar, for instance, which of course is less expensive than coal. It has been patented by M. Gillard of Paris. The steam is superheated by being passed through tubes laid in the brick-work of a furnace. The superheated steam is then brought into contact with a decomposing material, or hydrocarbon; and when the gas is produced, it is cleansed from any impurity by being passed through a preparation

of lime. Wire wicks of platinum, or some combustible metallic compound, are used to light the gas, which is very brilliant, and being without smell, can be odourised if desired.

LADY FLAVIA.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'LORD LYNN'S WIFE.'

CHAPTER XXI.—BY SUBMARINE AND INTERNATIONAL TELEGRAPH.

'FLAVIA, dearest, I do so wish you could like Hythe,' said Lady Caroline Clare, turning her head towards her companion, and apparently taking advantage of the fact that James the tiger had got down to open a gate through which it was necessary that the pony-carriage should pass. The gate was a clumsy one, for the top rail was composed of what seemed the whole trunk of a small tree, the unbarked end of which protruded so as to give the requisite leverage, while the lowest bar was buried in the moist gravel of the ill-kept road. James the tiger had to put out his strength, and to soil his white Woodstock gloves before he could drag back the creaking barrier, and leave the way clear for his young mistress to drive through. And as Lady Flavia slackened the reins of her impatient little steeds, and the light carriage jolted on over rut and stone, she looked round at her kinswoman, and smilingly rejoined: 'But I do like Cousin Hythe very much. I think him a dear good fellow; and I wish I had had a brother as honourable and sensible as yours.'

It was a frank, but hardly satisfactory answer, and Lady Caroline shook her head. 'Ah, Flavia, love!' she said, 'I am afraid you never will like Augustus as he would wish. And yet, though other young men, who have not really a tenth of his good qualities, may seem more brilliant, as Captain Fitzalaric does—'

'He is worth fifty of Captain Fitzalaric,' said Lady Flavia playfully; 'and I don't mind telling you, Carry, that if— But here comes James. And who, in the name of all that's extraordinary, have we here?'

The horseman who was approaching them, at a brisk canter, making the stones clatter and fly beneath his horse's ironshod feet, was certainly an odd-looking figure. He wore a macintosh, expanded balloon-wise by the strong breeze that seldom fails to blow on that high moorland ridge which lay north and west of Harbledown; he had a white hat, and leggings of some water-proof material; and, but for his awkward seat in the saddle, might have passed muster for a veterinary surgeon, bound for some farm where 'foot and mouth' was doing mischief among the oxen. But his cures were wrought on men, not beasts; and he was no other than Job Sankey, Esq., M.R.C.S., in his usual costume for moorland visiting. He checked his white-legged horse as he recognised the occupants of the pretty shell-shaped pony-carriage, and politely took off his hat.

'Oh, Mr Sankey,' said Lady Caroline quite eagerly, 'I do so want to hear the last news of your patient, poor little Susan, at Fletcher the wood-cutter's cottage, you know. I have not had time to go round myself, and she was so terribly weak when her mother came up to Harbledown.'

Lady Caroline was of a kindly nature, and she, rather than the countess, had begun to be regarded

as the Lady Bountiful of the neighbourhood. It is true that she viewed the poor in the light of children, to be lectured and taught, and supplied with flannel, soup, calico, and coals, rather than as brethren and sisters who needed a helping-hand to lift them out of the slough of pauperism; but she did good. It is better to give as Lady Caroline gave, than not to give at all; and the very sight of her comely good-humoured face was like a sunbeam in the house of affliction. Mr Sankey, who had lately become medical attendant at Harbledown, and who knew the earl's eldest daughter well from having met her in cottage-homes, was able to give her good news of Susan Fletcher. He said with perfect truth that, but for the hot-house fruit, the jellies, and wine, which had been supplied from Lord Mortlake's house, at his daughter's desire, he should have lost his patient. The sick child, large-eyed and hollow-cheeked, tossing in fever on her little bed, had really seemed to be brought back to life by those grapes from the great house, the first nourishment her parched lips had taken for weary days. And now she was mending fast, and would 'pull through,' as the surgeon phrased it.

'But I wish I could say as much of all my sick-list,' said Mr Sankey, turning half-round in his saddle, and tapping his stirrup-iron with his hunting-whip. 'Your ladyship perhaps remembers hearing of a gentleman who was shot, by mistake, it was thought, and lay under my care at the *Nag's Head*, Chartley Parva, some weeks since?'

'Yes, to be sure,' said Lady Caroline, looking up, and all alive to hear more, for no healthy mind is dead to curiosity. Lady Flavia remained looking down, trifling with the reins, and adjusting her white gauntlets.

'Well,' said the surgeon, 'I've just heard that he has undone all the good that physic and regimen had done him. He chose to dismiss his doctor and leave the inn before he was quite justified in doing so; still, he might have done well, with common prudence. But what does the wiseacre do but go to Slochester, and drink himself into a smart attack of delirium tremens, and there he is lying ill at the *Royal George*. Smithson attends him, and it was by meeting Smithson in consultation over at Downingham that I came to hear how ill this Captain Royston was.'

'Poor man,' said Lady Caroline, with genuine pity in her tone. 'Has he no friends to take care of him?'

Lady Flavia left off twitching at her gauntlets, and listened for the doctor's reply.

'Why, that's the queerest feature of the case, Lady Caroline. The young man was apt to be in dreadfully low spirits—always the way with those hard drinkers when their supply of alcohol is cut off—but he obstinately refused to allow me to write to his family. He chose, he said, to keep the thing quiet. And I believe no one about him exactly knows the address of his relations, while he is not in a fit condition to hold a pen. Smithson says his ravings were shocking; frightened the first nurse he had out of the room—accused himself of every crime under the sun—common symptom of delire. Beg your pardon, ladies, for keeping you so long in this bleak spot! Wish you a good-morning!'

But Mr Sankey was a great gossip, though a skilful practitioner, and he would have ended less

abruptly had he not noticed that Lady Flavia's manner of handling the whip and gathering up the reins evinced an impatience to bring the conversation to a close. As it was, he bowed, and rode on, and the pony-carriage swept swiftly in an opposite direction over the crest of the moor. Half a mile off, a white guide-post stood at the junction of three roads, with its fingers pointing respectively towards Chartley, Harbledown, and Downingham and Slochester. To the surprise of her companion, the mistress of the ponies wheeled her pretty equipage smartly round into the Chartley road, laid the lash over the mettled little brutes, and dashed rapidly down the rough moorland track. That part of the country belonged to Sir Neville Beecham, a great practical admirer of the good old plan of letting well (and ill) alone, and the roads were a disgrace to the century. But Lady Flavia dashed on fearlessly over rough and smooth at ten or twelve statute miles to the hour.

'Flavia, dear, what are you about? You are going wrong, love! The other road leads to Downingham, and that is where we are to go,' bleated Lady Caroline, looking with dismay at the deep ruts, the loose stones, and the water-courses that intersected the track. Lady Flavia laughed. Her laugh had never sounded so strangely before in her cousin's rather dull ear. Caroline was very fond of her young relative, none the less so, perhaps, because almost unconsciously her regard was spiced with fear, but this new freak vexed her.

'How the carriage jolts and rocks! You will upset us, you mad girl; and how are we to get to Mrs Plummington's, besides paying the call at the Archdeacon's, if you will persist in scampering over the country in this extraordinary way?' said Lady Caroline; and James the tiger, peering to right and left from his perch behind, and holding fast to the seat as the light carriage swayed and bounded in its headlong course over turf and gravel, looked very much as if he would have liked to back Lady Caroline's remonstrance with a word or two of warning. But James the tiger prudently kept silence. Lady Flavia Clare looked round and laughed at her cousin's frightened face. Her own face was unusually flushed, and her blue eyes were glittering.

'You dear single-minded Carry,' she said, 'I'll promise not to bring you to grief. You shall go home as safe and sound as if steady old Hedstell had been driving you in the family-coach. As for Mrs Plummington and the Archdeacon, *qu'il attendent!* I am going to Chartley.'

And she gave a shrill cry of encouragement to the ponies, now gallantly dashing on up a gentle slope, where the wheels cut furrows in the black peaty soil. Once up the slope, they were at the loftiest point in the high moor, where a cairn of huge gray stones stood piled, while beside it was the blackened stump of a thick post that had been a gibbet once, and on which the fleshless bones of a west-country highwayman had long swung rattling in chains, within the memory of some who were yet doddering and crooning in the chimney-corners of old farmhouses, or beside the scanty work-house fire. On both sides spread the great rolling moorland, billowing like a sea into mounds and hollows, and carpeted with heather that had lost its purple summer gloss, and was now a dusky flame, crimson red, flaring far and wide. In front, far below, were trees and cultured land, and a green

valley with a lazy stream winding through it and glimmering among the poplars; and further still was the pale thin wreath of rising smoke that floated over the chimneys of Chartley.

But the two fair occupants of the pony-carriage scarcely gave a glance or a thought to the prospect, with all its wealth of form and colour. Lady Caroline was half alarmed, half annoyed, and would have been wholly angry with any other person than the one beside her. But Lady Flavia was privileged—one of those few favoured mortals who follow their own wild will, yet offend nobody; and her cousin, though she deplored the apparently causeless freak of which she was the victim, contented herself with an occasional protest against the escapade. Lady Flavia, on the other hand, was evidently very much excited, and a score of signs betrayed the tumult of her spirits: she laughed and sang; but the laugh was short and almost fierce, and the songs were mere snatches of Italian or French ditties. She chirruped and talked to her ponies, stroked their glossy necks with the whip, and made the lash whistle and hiss about their ears, and laughed afresh as the carriage spun rapidly down the steep slope of the turnpike-road into which they had now struck, whirling round corners, and sending the mud in great splashes on all sides. As they approached Chartley, vehicles of all kinds were encountered, and many a carter looked back, gaping, at the flying equipage that swept past him like a tornado. The wilful girl who held the reins seemed to take a strange pleasure in brushing close by the ponderous wheels of wagons; in darting, like a dragon-fly on the wing, into the narrow space between two farmers' gigs; and when the Honeycombe coach passed with its top-heavy load of outsiders, the pony-carriage all but touched its hind-wheel as it was dexterously steered between the coach and a heavy timber-dray.

'Pray—pray take care!' gasped Lady Caroline; but her terror merely seemed to amuse her companion, whose blue eyes had a mocking light in them as she turned them towards the pale face beside her.

'Suppose a "frightful accident" were to occur, for the benefit of the country newspapers,' said Lady Flavia in that half-serious manner that always puzzled her kinswoman, 'would it really matter so very much? Would anybody miss me? Ah, I forgot you, Carry dear, with your old women and your schools. You do some good in the world; and for your sake, nobody's neck shall be broken. And indeed our cruise is nearly over, for there is the station.'

That was indeed the case: Chartley railway station, with its semaphore, and lamps red and green, and white telegraph-posts, and a dozen trucks in process of being laden with rough stone from the quarries, appeared within a quarter of a mile; and the black ponies, in a lather of foam and heat, with bits and curb-chains clotted with froth, stained sides, and quivering nostrils, were not sorry to be pulled up in front of the station. James sprang down, and Lady Flavia alighted.

'Lend me some money, Carry; I haven't got any,' she said laughing; and indeed the heiress who owned Cupley Lees and Melshot Friars had not an available sixpence. Young ladies in the country are seldom called upon for any direct outlay of actual cash, and James paid the tolls;

but Lady Caroline, whose alms-giving was extensive, was better provided. Lady Caroline produced her purse.

'What do you want now, Flavia?' she said. 'Surely you are not going anywhere by train. I couldn't—no, really I could not agree to that.'

Her imperious little friend laughed saucily as she took the purse.

'You dear old Carry,' she said, 'if I wanted to run off to Gretna, and chose to take you with me as gooseberry-picker, you would come along with me, under protest, of course. But I won't tease you any more. Five minutes' grace, and then we will jog home together as demurely and slowly as any Miss Goodchild could desire. Just wait for me; I will not be long.'

So saying, she passed through the booking-office into the telegraph-office, and disturbed the boy-clerks, who were beguiling their leisure with a game at marbles.

'You send messages to France?' she said quickly. The eldest lad, under a strong impression that to 'knuckle down' was a gross breach of official propriety, swept the marbles into his pocket, and turned to the window in which the applicant's pretty head and flushed, eager face now appeared. He replied in the affirmative, pushing a heap of 'forms' towards Lady Flavia. She wrote rapidly.

'Send this off at once, if you please; I wish to be certain that no time has been lost;' and he waited until the sharp click, click of the instrument had spelled out the last word of her message. Then she gathered up her change, dropped it into her cousin's porte-monnaie, and left the room.

'You never took your receipt, miss,' the young clerk called after her; but she did not hear him. Little oversights like this sometimes produce important results. In this case, the clerk picked up the little scrap of half-printed, half-written paper, and thrust it into a sort of japanned toast-rack full of memoranda and messages that could not be delivered for want of a proper address. 'If she wants it,' said the boy, 'she can have it by asking for it. She's not bad-looking, that Miss Jones.'

The sender of the telegram had given her name as Miss Emma Jones, and her address at the Earl of Mortlake's, Harbledown. This little written fib was impromptu. Lady Flavia Clare could not reasonably be supposed to be familiar with every detail of telegraphic communication, and, in fact, she had been unaware of the necessity of giving a name and address, or her own claim to a receipt. Her quick brain had in part solved the difficulty before the youthful clerk had had the trouble of calling her attention a second time to the needful formality. Jones—Emma Jones—she wrote the name down as easily as if it had been her daily practice to sign herself thus; but she gave no false address. Was not James the tiger, in the Mortlake livery, and with coronets on his buttons and a cockade in his hat, visible to porters and ticket-taker? And might not some bystander recognise the pony-carriage? But Miss Jones might reside under Lord Mortlake's roof, and yet be anybody—visitor, governess, hired companion to the countess; and Lady Flavia knew by intuition, it would seem, that a half-truth often stops the mouths of the inquisitive.

The cousins drove back to Harbledown very slowly in mercy to the ponies, and also to the nerves of Lady Caroline Clare; and on the way

home the younger of the two girls was wonderfully gentle, winning, and affable, quite unlike the capricious, almost brusque little creature that she had shewn herself a short time before. Lady Caroline was calmed and soothed, and instead of expatiating on her own terrors and her cousin's wilfulness, she gave her kith and kin to understand that Flavia, 'like a naughty darling,' had insisted on taking a long drive, instead of paying 'duty visits'; and when Lady Flavia returned her the borrowed money—some eighteen shillings or so—she never inquired in what the coin taken from her purse at the Chartley Station had been spent. It was a whim of Flavia's, she supposed, some fancy to order down a new bonnet or dress from a London milliner. But the telegram was not to a milliner—it was sent to Monsieur Brand Royston, Château des Roches, Grèves-Vignoble, près St Germain, in the empire of France; and it was urgent as to its contents.

CHAPTER XXII.—THE COLONEL MAKES HIS MIND UP.

Colonel Richard Ford was an early riser. Old Indians, such as he was, have long ago learned to consider the dawn as the most precious portion of the day, when baths are cool, and rides pleasant, and when it is possible to snatch a spell of healthful exercise before the fierce sun gathers power. He was up, and walking in the parsonage-garden of Mr Alleyne's house at Slochester before Mrs Alleyne's kitchen-maid had stolen shivering down the back-stairs, and with her unwashed hands had put back the shutters of the ground-floor windows, *en attendant* the high presence of cook and house-maid.

Colonel Ford, according to his practice, was early abroad. He wore his coat tightly buttoned, since the gray November fog clung, chilling and clammy, to tree and man, and the clouds above looked like gray blotting-paper, through which the mild British sun could not penetrate. The colonel chafed his cold hands, and thought of very different scenes where the best years of his life had been spent. Yellow plains in winter, green plains in summer, when the rice was waving unripened in the breeze; tops of feathery palms, and the rough thorny jungle beyond, with its tall bamboos and stunted arecas, and thatched huts, and temples as white as chunam could make them, and over all the blue unclouded sky, with an orange-tinted fiery ball mounting higher and higher like a balloon, until it burst into a shower of flaming rays. The box-borders, the queer old flowers, dahlias, hollyhocks, sun-flowers, marigolds, China roses, southernwood, were full of novelty to the long-expatriated Englishman; and yet not of novelty—of something sweater than novelty; for the sight and scent of those homely old plants and shrubs roused forgotten recollections, that bridged across the great gulf of Time, and Colonel Ford felt as if he were a boy again in his mother's garden, in the far-off days before he went to school, college, India.

But, in very truth, the colonel's thoughts were neither among the plump palms and arid plains amid which his manhood had gone by, nor had they long lingered in the scenes of his boyhood; they were drawn back involuntarily to the *Royal George Hotel*, and to the hours passed beside the sickbed of the raving wretch in Thirty-nine. Do what he would, the colonel could not shake off the

remembrance of Basil Royston, and of the train of thoughts that his wild words had evoked. He resisted this mental preoccupation; he fought against it; but his efforts were in vain. The sick man's words seemed to burn into his brain. 'Pshaw! I am getting old and whimsical,' he said, as he strode to and fro along the soft earthen walks, so different from the bright gravel of new-fashioned gardens, and saw the heavy rime fall from the peach-trees on the south wall. 'Why, if I think I trace some signs of a hidden, stealthy crime, am I to trumpet forth my discovery to all men? Why am I to open on the scent like a babbling young hound, full of importance at what I have been clever enough to sniff out? I dare say the whole mystery is a mare's nest; and if not, why, let Society send her own blood-hounds, salaried and trained, down the track. It is no business of mine.' And the colonel whistled quite a lively air as he dismissed the unwelcome subject.

Conscience, however, is not to be fobbed off in this manner—her still small voice kept ringing in the ears of the old soldier. 'Richard Ford, Richard Ford!' said the persistent voice, 'will you be false, now, to all the teachings of your life? Will you skulk, like a lazy coward, and allow others to bear the burden and heat of the day? Is it not the duty of every honest man to give help to the law, that exists for the good of all, and but for which we should be savages, greedy and blood-beameared? Is not he who winks at the impunity of a criminal, the virtual accomplice of the crime? And who are you who choose to pass by on the other side, and leave the wicked in their triumphant injustice—you who declare that you are not your brother's keeper? Richard Ford, Richard Ford, I am ashamed of you!'

But the colonel kept up a dogged fight; he really did not want to mix himself up in a business from which, once embarked in, he could not with honour withdraw until justice had been done; he felt quite angry with himself for having come down to Slochester; for having volunteered to sit by the couch of Basil Royston; and for having overheard the unconscious revelations that were shaping themselves into such ugly suspicions in his unwilling brain. He resisted, and strove obstinately. He did not intend to be a knight-errant, forsooth, and get pelted and bespattered for his redressing of wrongs.

'Good-morning, papa?' It was Amy who spoke. She had opened her window, and was leaning on the sill, looking down at him. Her face was pale, and her eyes had a careworn, thoughtful look. 'Papa,' said Amy, 'I am so glad it is day. I have slept very badly, and my dreams and thoughts were of poor Flavia. The more I think of it, the more wretched I feel. Papa, I am certain that some evil has— I'll put on my hat, and come down, and we'll walk about the garden before—'

'Hey, Ford, you out there among the slugs and snails! November's rather late for garden-walks, but perhaps you've been looking at the celery. The dean's is not to be named with it, though the dearney gardener gets double what my Robert gets,' called out the Rev. William Alleyne from his threshold. 'But come in, if you've had enough of it. The urn's in the breakfast-room, and I have rung the bell for morning prayers.'

All through the day, the colonel's behaviour was

exceedingly odd and unsatisfactory—he avoided his daughter; he was careful not to notice her pleading looks and anxious countenance; he would not speak one word with her in private, and feigned to misunderstand her whispers. He rattled and laughed in a way foreign to his nature, listened patiently to Mrs Alleyne's discourse, which was as a triple strand woven from the quoted wisdom of Mrs Randall's *Domestic Cookery*, Dr Graham's ditto *Medicine*, and the *Whole Duty of Man*, and adhered to the side of his brother-in-law for hours. He even allowed Mr Alleyne to read him the choicest portions of a sermon that his admirers had urged that he should embalm in type, though its author was too prudent to expend good money in cumbering the shelves of ecclesiastical booksellers with one homily the more. And he consented to devote a portion of the short November afternoon to inspecting such curiosities as the little church of St Eanswith's contained, inclusive of a parish register whose first entries bore the date of 1560, proving that the then incumbent and wardens were obedient to King Henry's Grace and my very good lord, Thomas Cromwell, Earl of Essex; two brasses shewing a knight and his dame, the latter in pointed hat, and wimple and pinners, in the style of Margaret of Anjou; and a noseless little image of blackened stone, which was fondly believed to represent St Eanswith herself.

Mr Alleyne, whose affection for his church resembled that of a mariner for his ship, saw nothing remarkable in the sudden plasticity with which his brother-in-law permitted himself to be drawn within sound of the feeble roaring of St Eanswith's puny lions. But Amy in the course of the last few weeks had learned to know her father sufficiently well to be sure that he was merely trying to distract his thoughts from some graver preoccupation, and also, which seemed unkind, was evidently holding aloof from anything like conversation with herself. She said nothing, however, but let him go on his way through the narrow and tortuous by-streets towards where the low square tower of St Eanswith's reared its truncated top above the ambitious chimney-stacks of the neighbouring dwellings. It may be doubted whether the colonel paid as much genuine attention to the queer old vellum-bound register, with its brass clasps and early black-letter entries, and red crosses to mark the signatures of bride and bridegroom, as that quaint volume really merited. At any rate, when he left the church, in company with Mr Alleyne, he said somewhat abruptly: "Suppose we go round by the hotel, and see how that poor fellow is getting on. It seems hardly right to leave him to himself." The vicar was as humane as most men; but he did not wish to go back to the *Royal George*, and hear any more of the wild talk of that terrible invalid in number Thirty-nine. Besides, he had secured what is always a treasure in country life, a patient and intelligent listener, and he clung to his prize as a limpet to a rock. He wanted to tell the colonel 'all about' his suit in Doctors' Commons concerning a disputed tithe-charge, before Bishop Dibbs ascended the throne in Slochester Cathedral. He had resolved to give his brother-in-law the exciting pleasure of perusing some of the letters he had received from his proctor, with the great Dr Wotton's written opinion on the nice points of law involved in the

case of the Rev. William Alleyne, Clerk, v. the Dean and Chapter of Slochester. He meant also to explain how the case was removed by writ to the High Court of Chancery; and how Lord Bagnsworth had from the judgment-seat recommended that the parties should 'split the difference' rather than be bled to death by bills of costs; after which a compromise was agreed to, rather to Mr Alleyne's chagrin, on account of his confidence in Dr Wotton's opinion, and the justice of his cause.

'There's Smithson!' exclaimed the vicar gaily, as the doctor and his umbrella suddenly came round the corner: 'he will tell us how his patient is.'

Mr Smithson's report was satisfactory so far as it went. The patient was improving steadily. Colonel Ford's prescription (not that the surgeon gave the colonel more than a very small share of the credit of that recipe, which he sincerely believed to be almost entirely his own) had acted like a charm. The nurse reported that the sick man had slept soundly. He had not talked much more 'nonsense,' Mrs Ovens said; he had been quiet and docile. But he was weak, and in wretchedly low spirits, whimpering out prayers for strong drink, 'just a thimbleful,' and shedding unmanly tears when the strong drink was denied him. He was asleep just then, and the doctor meant to call later, and had little doubt but that he should find Captain Royston better. To-morrow, if the improvement continued, a little chicken-broth might be beneficial; and so forth.

'And now, Richard,' said Mr Alleyne, tightening his grasp of his relative's arm, after the surgeon had left them—'now we'll go home and make ourselves comfortable over my study fire—you shall smoke if you like—Mrs Alleyne won't mind your indulging in a cigar in my den—and I'll just tell you the whole story of that tithe-charge business from first to last. I can shew you the very first letter from the solicitor to the chapter, and so on, down to the taxed bill of costs of my own agents; and I think you'll agree with me that Lord Bagnsworth was misinformed in the matter, and that, if we had nailed our colours to the mast, we should have come off winners after all.'

What thoughts were travelling through the brain of Colonel Ford as he sat decorously listening, with his feet on the fender, and his eyes on the red depths of the coal-fire, to his brother-in-law's oral and documentary statement of facts connected with the great tithe-cause? They were many and various, but through them all was an under-current of self-reproach. The voice that had spoken to Richard Ford as he walked the garden-paths that morning was busy at his heart; and it was in answer to that voice, whose small but imperious accents drowned the somewhat monotonous discourse of the vicar, that the colonel exclaimed, unaware: 'Absurd! rank nonsense! What right has society to put this hangman's office upon me, whether I will or no?—Dear me! I beg your pardon, William!'

We never know what events, to all seeming unconnected with our purposes or interests, are shaping themselves into being in places afar off. While Colonel Ford was doing his best to shew a decent interest in St Eanswith's register, brasses, and battered effigy, Lady Flavia Clare was dashing down the hills towards Chartley at the full speed of her black ponies. As the colonel entered the vicar's study, and meekly submitted to have his

ears assailed by the contents of a mass of papers 'of no value except to their owner,' as the advertisements say, Lady Flavia Clare was listening to the clicking of the telegraph instrument, and watching the vibration of the needle across the dial-plate, as the words of her message were flashed away along the fateful wire that links distant minds together in a subtle union, and laughs at space. But all this was of necessity unknown to Colonel Ford.

Nevertheless, when the colonel said good-night on that evening, and retired to his room, and when there came a tap at his door, and in answer to his bidding to come in, Amy came in, in a white wrapper, with loosened hair (for the colonel had lingered late), and with tears in her eyes asked her father why he avoided her, and how she had displeased him, he stooped over and kissed her, as he said: 'Because I was selfish, Amy, and inclined to shirk a duty, and therefore, like all cowards and self-seekers, avoided whatever would remind me of what I had neglected. My little girl, you have only forestalled me. I made up my mind an hour ago to do the thing that is right, and to leave the issue to a wider Wisdom than that of men. I should have spoken of this in the morning, but perhaps it is better as it is. I give you my word to do all I can to clear up this mystery about your poor young friend, though it seems more like some grim tale of diablerie than anything to be expected in these prosaic days of ours.'

There was a little more conversation, in the course of which Amy learned from her father, that by a chance that appeared providential, he had discovered that the gentleman lying ill at the hotel, Captain Royston, was more or less deeply implicated in the transactions, whatever they might have been, that had preceded the arrival of Lady Flavia at Harbledown. The colonel touched as lightly as possible on the hideous nature of the sufferer's self-accusations, truly adding, that whatever dark corners there might exist in even the purest human heart, delirium unveiled the lurking deformity with pitiless and sometimes exaggerated distinctness. It was by no means a proof of guilt committed that a raving wretch should charge himself with such and such offences, and very likely Captain Royston was not practically so wicked as his own lips had declared him in those moments of torture. But it seemed certain that he could throw light upon the question of Lady Flavia Clare's identity with Amy's former friend, and this the colonel considered so necessary, that he was resolved, as soon as the patient was sufficiently reasonable, to have his deposition formally taken down in presence of a magistrate.

'To-morrow, papa?' said Amy wistfully. 'Oh, do consider what may happen in the meantime. My poor dear Flavia—I feel as if she were in suffering and sorrow, and with no friend on earth to help her—except you and me.'

'To-morrow!' said the colonel smiling; and Amy kissed him gratefully, and went away comforted. Her dreams were happier dreams on that night. How little could either of them, father or daughter, know that through all those dark hours of the night a traveller was speeding on his hasty way as fast as steam could carry him across the French plains, across the surging waves of the Channel, past the rolling outlines of the Kentish chalk-downs, and on into sleeping London. A fast

morning train left the Great Western terminus at so early an hour that the piles of damp newspapers could hardly be conveyed in time to the station by their breathless bearers; and the passengers walked stamping up and down the platform to warm their half-frozen feet, as the porters shovelled luggage into the vans. There was a passenger in one of the first-class carriages of that train who had had no sleep, but whose iron frame was proof against fatigue, a large, loud-speaking man, with heavy gray moustaches and fierce bull-eyes. He took his ticket for Slochester. The train rushed off, screaming and tearing down into the west, and before breakfast was over at Mr Alleyne's parsonage, the rapid steam-horse with its living load had devoured many a league of the ground that lay between London and the cathedral of St Willibald Martyr.

TRAVELLING IN NEW SOUTH WALES.

In this comfortable and convenient country of England, ladies often talk of the difficulty and inconvenience of travelling alone; but few of those who have lived in England, or even extended their journeys over the European continent, can form any idea of the inconveniences, or rather the miseries, of female travelling at the antipodes. Men can always ride on horseback, and make themselves tolerably comfortable at the roadside inns; but for women, there are three almost equally wretched modes of locomotion: First, in a private carriage, in which, with good horses, good driver, and good-luck in having no breakages, they may, if the roads are in good condition, get over thirty or forty miles a day. I have known a gentleman's carriage break down on a desolate road, and his wife obliged to step into the 'bush,' divest herself of her corded petticoat, and her husband and servant manage to remedy the mishap with the cords out of that article of attire. The lady of course arrived at her destination in a very shrunken and collapsed state; none of the smartness about her naturally expected in a person just arrived from Sydney, and quite unable, in the far-away district, to procure another petticoat of the same kind. Secondly, women may travel in the coach which conveys her 'Majesty's Mails'; it is more like a wagon; sometimes it boasts of a tarpaulin covering, but usually it is merely a wagon on springs, with seats running from one end to the other. The third and lowest degree in the travelling scale is the top of a wool-drag.

It was my bad-fortune, about four years ago, to be obliged to undertake a really long journey by the mail-coach; I was only accompanied by my two little children, both under four years of age. The coach passed through the bush village in which I was staying at ten o'clock in the morning;* there were only three passengers that day, rough-looking men, probably returning from the diggings. We got on well enough the first part of our journey, till we came to a sudden stoppage, and the driver exclaimed, with many expletives, more forcible than polite, that the coach was bogged. The four horses, thoroughly strong, hard-working animals, but sadly out of condition, and weedy in their appearance, pulled and dragged,

but we did not move. The driver then got off his seat, and requested the male passengers to assist him in his attempt to move the wheels with his shoulder. Two of the men consented unwillingly; the other said: 'Not as he know'd of,' and remarked encouragingly to me, that we were 'in for a night of it unless there was a hut near.' Most fortunately, there was a hut about half a mile distant, the owner of which possessed a team of bullocks; and after several unavailing attempts of the men to move the wheels, during which time they were considerably above their knees in mud, the driver despatched one of them to the hut; and after a long delay, the bullocks and their owner appeared, and the strong and docile beasts soon drew us safely out of this Slough of Despond. We were so much hindered by this accident that we did not arrive at the village, where dinner was to be ready for the coach-passengers, till nearly dusk; and the driver warned us that we must 'look sharp, as there was a nastyish bit of road ahead.'

Most thankfully we alighted at the inn where we were to dine; tired, cold, and inexpressibly stiff and hungry, we tottered into a tolerably cheerful room with a blazing fire, and dinner already on the table, emitting a most welcome and savoury smell; when, alas! the landlady rushed in, and informed us that that room and dinner were for some gentry travelling in their own carriage; and we were hurried into another smaller room, where the fire of wet wood was just lit—no signs of dinner or any preparations for our comfort. At last, we were served with some tough, underdone mutton chops, heavy bread, salt-butter, and tea without milk. The coachman sat at the head of the table and poured out the tea, and begged us to finish as fast as we could, because of the bad road and darkness. For that wretched meal, I paid for myself and children seven shillings and sixpence, besides something, I forgot what, for the waiter, who did not wait, at least I did not see him; doubtless he was occupied with the party eating our dinner in the adjoining room.

On re-entering the mail, the driver advised my sitting at the bottom of the coach, and holding both children on my lap, as the road was so bad that it would be impossible for me to keep on the seat; and it was most fortunate for me and the children that I followed his advice, for the road was so fearfully rough, that even by sitting at the bottom, with my back to the seat, and my feet pressed hard against the side, it was all I could do to steady the children, so as to prevent their getting some severe blows. The shocks at times were so violent that my breath, and that of my fellow-passengers, was knocked out of my body with a loud 'houf' (Any one who has seen a French wood-cutter chopping wood, and has noticed the noise he makes each time his axe falls, will understand what I mean.) Another ominous stoppage, and a good deal of talk between the driver and a man who came out of a roadside hut; and then the driver points out to us a large dray bogged in the middle of the road, and bogged to such an extent that not one bit of the large wheels is visible above the sea of mud in which it is engulfed. (I often wonder whether that dray is still there; I cannot think how it could ever have been extricated.) After much deliberation, it is decided that we shall leave the road, and make our way across part of Sir William Macarthur's property, the man of the hut furnishing

* It was winter-time, and the roads in a fearful state from long-continued rain.

us with a lantern. What we went through for the next hour or more, I shall never forget; it was truly agony: the fearful jolts shook my tired body almost to pieces. How the poor children bore it so quietly, astonished me. One of the passengers was thrown off his seat with such violence that his head struck against an iron bar at the top of the coach, which supported a sort of tarpaulin covering, and he was partially stunned. The driver administered some brandy out of his pocket-flask to the sufferer, and on we went. It was by this time so dark, we could not see anything; but by our sensations, we must have gone over some wonderful places. At last we were able to return to the main road, and before very long we drove into Campbell Town, and our first day's journey was over. We had a tolerable tea at the inn there, and though the landlady assured me she could not even let me have a sofa to sleep on, the house was so full, by much persuasion, I was allowed a small bed for myself and children in a double-bedded room; the other bed was occupied by two women, who had arrived by another coach.

Our second day's journey was performed in a shorter time, and in a far pleasanter manner, by railway. The New South Wales' Railway is very comfortable; the second-class carriages almost as good as the first-class in England; but it goes at a very slow pace, one reason for which I believe is a curve of the line, which makes it dangerous to go fast. We reached Paramatta at twelve o'clock noon, and remained there till the mail-coach started for the west at seven o'clock P.M. Paramatta is a good-sized town, but I should be sorry to live there, for even in that winter month (the beginning of August) there was a steamy heat that was very enervating. At seven o'clock on a pitch-dark night, we took our places in the mail bound for Bathurst; the jolting was quite equal to what we had suffered the previous day, but it was too dark to see what sort of a road it was; and at a quarter to twelve at night we reached Penrith, where we were to sleep. No supper was provided for us, so I requested the landlord of the inn to shew me a bedroom: there was no woman visible. I asked to have my portmanteau carried to my room, but was told that unless I could carry it myself to the coach in the morning, I had better leave it in the bar, where it was sure to be safe, as it was an impossibility to carry two sleepy children, all my shawls and wrappers, carpet-bag, and portmanteau to the coach without help. I reluctantly left it in the bar; and it was many long weeks before I again saw it, for in the night a down-mail arrived, and carried my portmanteau back to Paramatta, the reason given being, that it looked as if it belonged to a Mr Irton residing there, although it had my initials, G. H., painted large on it. Our bedroom was across a large yard; and on each side of the room-door hung the newly-slaughtered carcass of a sheep, which had a most ghastly appearance by the light of the candle. The room was as uncomfortable as possible: no sheets or pillow-cases on the bed; no water in the pitcher; and I gladly paid a shilling to procure a whole candle instead of the inch and a half that was offered me, for I could not have remained in the dark in that lonely wretched room.

We were to be waked at ten minutes to four in the morning, giving us just ten minutes for

our toiletz, as the coach started at 'four sharp.' I laid the children on the bed, and sitting in a chair by their side, tried to get a little sleep; but alas! we soon found the room and bed were full of those abominable dirty insects which are one of the pests of the colony. They ran about in such numbers that the room smelt of them; and I was really thankful when we heard the coachman knock and say we must be ready to start in ten minutes, and managed to drag all my belongings across the yard, and to the door of the inn, by the stated time. It rained fast, but the coach to-day had no covering, and was simply an open wagon, with springs of some sort. I was the only passenger that morning except a gentleman, who went on the seat with the driver, and I found, to my horror, that the coach (by courtesy) was full of hay, piled up in great trusses; and really all the space left for me and the children was about eight inches on each side of the door, which was at the end of the wagon (or coach). It was useless complaining, and I was obliged to go on; so I managed to sit half on the seat, half on the iron railing, about four inches high, which was all that prevented us from falling out. I think the next few hours were about the most uncomfortable of the journey. The road was on an ascent the whole time, and the hay was not properly lashed, and continually slipped down, and nearly forced us out of the coach. The driver got down several times, and pushed it back into its place, and told me to keep my back against it; but what use was my strength against that detestable hay, which was not like English hay, tolerably soft, but being oats cut when green, was stiff and hard.

We must have been travelling about an hour from Penrith when we came to the Nepean River, the bridge over which had been totally destroyed by the late floods. We drove to the brink of the river, and the driver cooey'd several times. I began to wonder how we were going over, when I saw in the dim light a monstrous black thing slowly making its way across the wide river: it must have been, I think, a sort of pontoon. We drove on to it, and then in some manner that still remains a mystery to me, the driver and the other passenger kept pulling a rope, and we slowly crossed to the other side. On we went again, jolting over Emu Plains, and before long, commenced the ascent of the Blue Mountains: here the scenery was magnificent; but I shall not attempt to describe it, as this is only an account of my own sufferings. We had a really good breakfast a few miles up the mountain; and at two o'clock dined on the very summit, at the *Blue Mountain Inn*, which has been struck I know not how many times by lightning. Only a short time before I was there, three men and thirteen horses had been killed a few yards from the inn by a flash of lightning. Here we left our load of hay, and very thankful I was to get rid of it. Now we commenced the descent of the mountain. The road is wonderfully good in most places; it was cut out of the side of the mountain by convicts; we passed the now ruined stockade where the wretched prisoners slept at night, strongly guarded; and the driver pointed out a precipice down which, he said, the bodies of those convicts who had died there were thrown. This dreary place is called Black-heath, though it has not the slightest resemblance to its namesake near Greenwich.

The road was strewed in most places with skeletons of bullocks, who had died the preceding summer of thirst and fatigue, whilst dragging the heavy wool-drags up the mountain. Not very long after, I travelled the same road in summer, when the dust was up to the axle-trees, and the smell of the decaying carcasses was dreadful, and crowds of gray crows were feasting on them. The last part of the descent, called Mount Victoria, was terrifically steep, and we drove down at a tremendous rate, whilst the rain fell in torrents; and we were quite wet through, when, about half-past eleven at night, we reached the inn at Great Hartley, a small straggling hamlet. Here we had supper, at which meal, and at every other one on the road, the driver sat at the head of the table, carved (if there was anything to carve), and poured out the tea, which in New South Wales accompanies every meal. For a wonder, at this inn there was a chamber-maid, who shewed me to my bedroom, to get to which we had to pass through another double-bedded room. As there were no fastenings to the door of my room, I remarked that I supposed no one would occupy the outer room. 'Certainly not,' the woman said; 'there was no chance of any one arriving that night; and besides, there were other rooms unoccupied.' So I quietly composed myself to sleep, till the usual ten minutes to four, when I was to be called to continue my journey. At the appointed time, the chamber-maid knocked at the door, and when I was partly dressed, I thought I would carry my carpet-bag to the door of the outer room, in hopes some one might charitably carry it for me to the coach. I took my candle in one hand, and my bag in the other, but when I reached the middle of the outer room, I suddenly became aware that both the beds were occupied—two men in each, who were looking at me with evident curiosity. I hastily retreated to my own room, and finished my dressing, after which I again sallied forth with children, bag, and wrappers. One of the occupants of the beds lifted up his head, and requested me to shut the door carefully, as the latch was out of order; he did not seem to think there was anything extraordinary in this very un-English arrangement of bedrooms. I heard these men were the gold escort, who had arrived unexpectedly during the night from the western gold-diggings; and I must have been very sound asleep, or they must have been very quiet, for me not to hear them going to bed.

We reached Bathurst that afternoon about three o'clock, and started again the next morning at four A.M. for Carcoar in the mail-cart, a sort of dog-cart, meant to carry only one passenger besides the driver; with one horse between the shafts, and another attached as outrigger. There is no real road from Bathurst to Carcoar, only a bush-track, but it was much less rough than the main roads, because there was less traffic, and therefore it was not so much cut up. The driver, a boy about nineteen, chose his own road in most places. He had, I suppose, an idea that he could sing, for the whole of that day he kept shouting over the first two lines of the hackneyed song, *Good News from Home*; however, he made a slight variation in the words of that melody, as he invariably said 'the white blue sea' instead of 'the wide blue sea.' But he was very civil, and did his utmost to make me as comfortable as he could; indeed, during the

whole of my journey, I met with the greatest civility and kindness. The rough men who were my usual fellow-passengers would hold one of the tired children on their knees for hours, or would take them on the coach-box for a change; and at dinner, &c., myself and the children were always helped first, and treated with every attention. At Carcoar, my journey by the mail ended, and very glad I was to find myself at last near home.

THE OLD LETTER.

I BURNED the others, one by one; but my courage failed at last,
And I snatched this, scorched and yellow, where the fire's
breath had passed.
I could not let it lie there, for it turned like a thing in
pain;
And I love it for the old times' sake, that never come
again.

They used to call me beautiful; I had nothing else beside.
There was none more great or wise than he in all the
world wide;
And it's still a sort of pleasure—very mournful though
it be—

To know he once could think such thoughts, and write
such words of me.

But my poor beauty faded; 'twas the only thing I had.
I was always weak and foolish, and my whole life grew sad,
For the cruel blighting fever left me pitiful to see
(Oh, it's true that 'Beauty's fleeting!'), and my Love no
more loved me.

I'd have loved him all the more for that or any grief
beside;

But then he was so different. Oh, if I had only died!
And yet, how can I wish him to have suffered in my
stead?

I think it would have grieved him then to hear that I was
dead.

I have nothing to forgive him; still, he very soon forgot.
Men have much to do and think of, that we girls have not.
A man has little thought to spare for his own chosen
wife;

Women's minds are very narrow, and a girl's love is her
life.

They say I should forget him, but I cannot if I would,
For since my beauty left me, I have tried hard to be
good;

And his name is always on my lips, when I pray to God
above—

Oh, surely I may pray for one I can never cease to love!

I was never fit to be his wife, even when my face was

fair;

But every one may pray to Heaven; we are all equal there.
And God, in His great mercy, will not pass my prayers by.

I have one thing left to live for—to pray for him till I

die.

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